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School Reform News

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Massive Fraud Alleged in DC Teacher Union

STORY ON PAGE 16

White House Photo by Paul Morse

President George W. Bush reads to students at J.C. Nalle Elementary School in Washington, DC on February 9, 2001. Contrary to popular myth, reading does not come "naturally" to students; it is a skill that must be taught and practiced.

Officials charged with diverting $5 million in member dues

MIKE ANTONUCCI

Just before Christmas last year, federal officials raided the homes and offices of former officials of the Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) in search of goods allegedly purchased with more than $5 million in union funds.

The items listed in an FBI affidavit include $500,000 in custom-made clothing, a 288-piece antique Tiffany sterling silver set, a $6,800 ice bucket, furs, alligator shoes, jewelry, artwork, wine, wigs, a 50" plasma television, and computer equipment. Agents were investigating expenditures on a Bahamas vacation and bar and nightclub tabs.

Police also found a double-barrel shotgun in the home of former WTU President Barbara Bullock, a firearm for which she had no permit. *Washington City Paper* reporter David Morton wrote the booty seized "reads like the manifest of a pirate ship."

The investigation, conducted by the FBI, the IRS, the Department of Labor, and the District of Columbia inspector general, began last Fall following union member complaints about being overcharged for dues. Subsequently, Bullock, Treasurer James Baxter, and Bullock's assistant, Gwendolyn Hemphill, all resigned or were dismissed when an American Federation of Teachers (AFT) audit discovered "financial improprieties."

A month later, the parent AFT filed a racketeering lawsuit against the former officials, charging an illegal diver-

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Voucher Lessons from Sweden

Socialist embrace of free market brings positive outcomes

ROBERT HOLLAND

School choice has come to Sweden in a big way over the past 10 years, confounding widespread perceptions of the Swedes as statists and providing inspiration for supporters of market-based education reform in the U.S.

Sweden has the highest rate of taxation in the West and the highest ratio of public spending to GNP of the industrialized nations. For all but nine years during the postwar era, the Social Democrats have ruled this Scandinavian country.

Yet, as a result of a top-to-bottom education reform launched in 1991-92, virtually anyone can start a school in Sweden and receive public funding. Families are free to choose whatever state-subsidized school they prefer for their children, including those run by churches.

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Vouchers Improve Public Schools

KRISTA KAFER

Opponents of school choice frequently argue that giving parents vouchers will hurt the public schools, resulting in bad schools producing even worse educational achievement for their students.

But a new study of the real-world effects of competition on public schools shows just the opposite occurs: Empowering parents with the authority to choose schools prompts public schools to improve, helping students rather

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School Reform News is available on the Internet. Point your web browser to http://www.heartland.org.

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SCHOOL REFORM NEWS (ISSN 1092-8839) is published 11 times per year by The Heartland Institute. Subscriptions are free to U.S residents and $24 per year for foreign residents. Order online at www.heartland.org. Heartland is a nonprofit and nonpartisan public policy research organization serving the nation's federal and state elected officials, journalists, Heartland Members, and other opinion leaders. Its activities are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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CAPITOL HILL BEAT

Boost for DC Charters; Tax Credits Grab Early Attention

DON SOIFER

As the ice on the Potomac River reached its thickest level in a decade, the 108th Congress settled in to undertake its first round of school reform.

Landrieu Seeks to Aid DC Charters

The session began under unusual circumstances, with lawmakers needing to begin with last term's unfinished appropriations business. Led by Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu, ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Subcommittee for the District of Columbia, the Senate passed a bill that included a significant and welcome boost for District charters, in the form of $20 million in new federal funding targeted at improving facilities.

Currently, 15 percent of Washington, DC students attend its 35 public charter schools. While overall public school enrollment in the city has declined in recent years, the charter population has increased.

Only 14 of those 35 charter schools occupy permanent space, according to the District charter group Friends of Choice in Urban Schools. The rest rely on space leased wherever they can find it, a situation that complicates growth and adds uncertainty to future planning.

Often occupying what was formerly commercial space, charter leaders have expressed dismay that the District's public school leaders refuse to make vacant school buildings available for use by charters. As with much of the nation's charter movement, the challenge of securing safe and reliable facilities stands as perhaps their greatest obstacle to further growth.

Landrieu's plan provides $15 million in revolving loans that charters can apply for to acquire, renovate, or maintain facilities. It also creates a new office of charter school financing in addition to allocating $4 million in direct support.

Another provision in the bill directs the General Services Administration to work with District authorities to assess the availability of all surplus buildings, and to draw up plans to utilize at least 50 percent of surplus space, with charter schools receiving top preference.

Reformers Seek to Establish Tax Credits

On the heels of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Zelman* decision and the No Child Left Behind Act, some legislators see tuition tax credits as a logical next step to promote parental choice at the federal level. To that end, the Education Freedom Act was introduced in January by Representatives Pete Hoekstra (R-Michigan), Mark Souder (R-Indiana), and Tom Tancredo (R-Colorado).

The bill includes provisions for an individual tax credit of 50 percent, up to $500 per family, and a corporate tax credit of 50 percent, up to $50,000. Both individual and corporate credits may be applied to contributions to qualified scholarship organizations and to public or private elementary or secondary schools; however, the credits cannot be applied against K-12 educational expenses made by individuals themselves.

President Bush's budget does not include a line item for such a tax credit, as it did last year, a significant obstacle the plan's supporters will have to address. It does, however, include $226 million in refundable tax credits for parents transfering a child fom a public school identified for improvement under the NCLB Act. But supporters will enjoy more advantageous positions from which to argue their case, thanks to placement on key committees. Tancredo has won a seat on the House Budget Committee, and Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Virginia) now serves on the powerful Ways and Means Committee. In his second term, Cantor authored one of last year's most well-regarded tax credit proposals.

Hoekstra, one of Congress's foremost champions of parental choice, described tax credits as a way for the federal government to partner with parents, corporations, and communities to bring new investment to local educational opportunities.

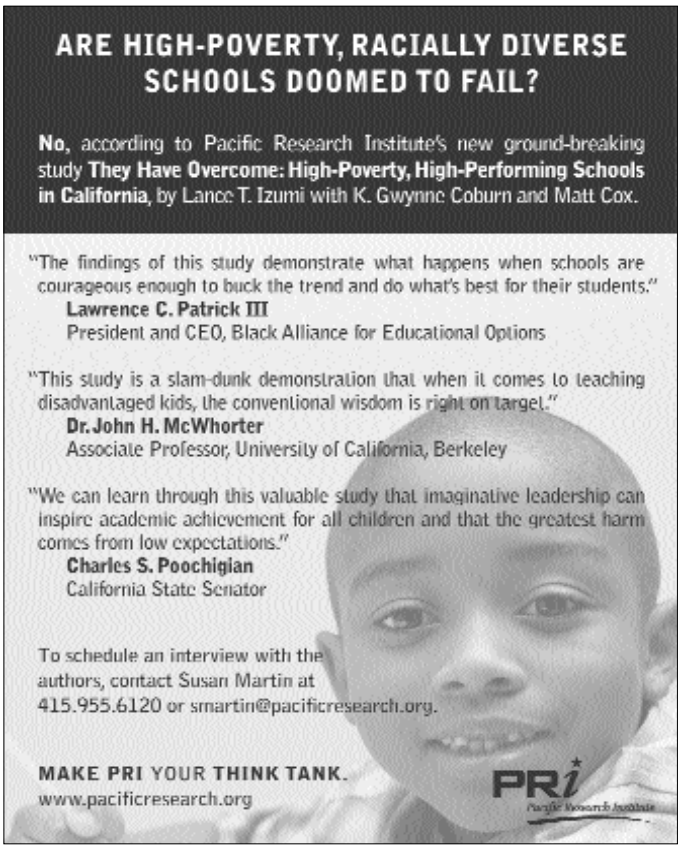
"Tax credits promote the ultimate flexibility to funnel cash to schools in need," Hoekstra told *School Reform News*. "They reward schools that succeed and empower parents and local businesses to make the decisions to improve the education of children in their communities, while allowing the federal government to encourage and foster this local support and community involvement without unnecessary bureaucracy."

Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu

Alexander Joins Senate Ed Committee

The Senate Education Committee will have one new face this session, one familiar to education reformers. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-Tennessee), former U.S. Secretary of Education, Tennessee Governor, and president of the University of Tennessee, took the place of Maine Senator Susan Collins, who departed the committee in favor of other assignments.

Don Soifer is executive vice president of the Lexington Institute. His email address is soifer@lexingtoninstitute.org.


ARE HIGH-POVERTY, RACIALLY DIVERSE SCHOOLS DOOMED TO FAIL?
No, according to Pacific Research Institute's new ground-breaking study They Have Overcome: High-Poverty, High-Performing Schools in California, by Lance T. Izumi with K. Gwynne Coburn and Matt Cox.
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President and CEO, Black Alliance for Educational Options
"This study is a slam-dunk demonstration that when it comes to teaching disadvantaged kids, the conventional wisdom is right on target."
Dr. John H. McWhorter
Associate Professor, University of California, Berkeley
"We can learn through this valuable study that imaginative leadership can inspire academic achievement for all children and that the greatest harm comes from low expectations."
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California State Senator
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SWEDEN continued from page 1

After 10 years, what lessons can be learned from Swedish education reform?

School Choice Works

"The main lesson to be learned from the Swedish reforms is that school choice works," concluded Swedish economists and researchers Mikael Sandström and Fredrik Bergström in a January 2003 study for the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation. "Sweden has left behind an almost completely centralized system, with tight national control of schooling and a minuscule role for non-governmental institutions."

In short, Sweden has done a 180-degree turn in education over the past decade, in the process generating a number of positive results. Although the U.S. is far behind Sweden and much of Western Europe in school choice—ironically so, given the vibrancy of the American market economy—the researchers believe there are a number of lessons the U.S. can take from Sweden.

Among the positive outcomes they found from Sweden's shift to free educational choice:

- The number of independent schools has increased fivefold. Under Swedish law, they now must be funded equally with the municipal schools—as Swedish public schools are known—once they have received approval to operate.
- Attendance in independent schools has quadrupled.
- Student performance in Sweden's government-run schools has increased, the apparent result of competition from a much-increased supply of schools.
- Most of the independent schools are run by for-profit educational management companies, with no negative effect on the quality of education.
- Free choice under a voucher-style approach has not led to advantages for the elite rich. In fact, poorer Swedes choose independent schools at higher rates than do affluent families.
- While there are differences of opinion within the teaching profession, the Swedish teacher unions have not opposed school choice. Surveys show teachers tend to prefer working in the independent schools because they find the climate for teaching better there.

Were full choice to become the norm in the U.S., perhaps American teachers would begin to wonder why their unions have demonized vouchers. The study notes that when teachers can choose not only among several municipal schools but also many independent schools, they benefit by being able to market their skills and choose a school that best fits their interests.

Two Steps to School Reform

Before reform was launched in Sweden, teachers were employees of the national government, which paid their salaries. Municipal governments ran schools according to national rules and regulations.

The first step in the reform process came in 1991, when legislation transferred responsibility for education from the national government to the localities. Teachers became municipal employees. The omnipotent National Board of Education was scuttled and replaced by the National Agency for Education, charged with setting goals for the school system rather than directing how the goals will be met.

The second step came soon thereafter, when a non-socialist government won election and introduced legislation giving independent schools the right to receive funding from the municipalities on an equal basis with the municipal schools. The National Agency for Education approves all schools that meet specified requirements, such as refraining from discriminatory admissions, charging no fees, and operating in harmony with the national curriculum.

In practice, the National Agency rejects few applications to start schools. For instance, in the year 2000, the Agency approved 125 applications for primary schools and rejected only 13. Rejections mainly were for incomplete applications or lack of evidence the applicants could sustain a school.

"Apart from the Netherlands," the researchers noted, "establishing an independent school is probably easier in Sweden than in any other country."

When the Social Democrats returned to power in 1994, the government did not act to reverse the reforms. Of the seven parties in Parliament, Bergström and Sandström wrote, only the former Communists in the "Left Party," which receives only about 10 percent of the popular vote, flatly oppose parental choice and the right of independent schools to public funding.

Sweden vs. U.S.

Obviously, sharp differences exist in the sociopolitical climates of Sweden and the U.S. Most American independent schools probably would consider fealty to a national curriculum too high a price to pay for state subsidies. Indeed, local public schools in the U.S. are wary of a national curriculum. Nevertheless, the Swedish reforms parallel measures that could be adopted by individual states using their own educational standards.

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute, a think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is rholl1176@yahoo.com.

For more information…

WWW The January 2003 report by Mikael Sandström and Fredrik Bergström, "School Choice Works! The Case of Sweden," can be found at the Web site of the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation at **http://www.friedmanfoundation.org/schoolchoiceworks/swedenstudy0103.pdf**.

The report is also available through *PolicyBot*. Point your Web browser to **http://www.heartland.org**, click on the *PolicyBot* icon, and search for document #**11451.**

More School Choice Lessons from Abroad

Parental choice leads to better schools in Third World

GEORGE CLOWES

The aim of paying teachers in India's government schools four times what they would make in private schools was to make them better teachers, noted British researcher James Tooley in a recent issue of *The Spectator*. They also have lifetime job security.

"In India, we have a saying: 'You can hire him, only God can fire him,'" private educator Ranga Setty told Tooley, who is professor of education policy at the University of Newcastle and head of the E.G. West Centre for Market Solutions in Education.

But Tooley reports private schools are opening in the slums of Hyderabad, where less than 40 percent of all students are enrolled in government schools. Even though the government schools offer free tuition, free books, and free lunches, many poor families scrimp and save to pay the cost of a private school. Even with low fees, private schools can make a profit.

"We want teachers who teach," one mother told Tooley. "And we want our children to learn English, but that's not allowed in the government primary schools."

When the Indian government sponsored an examination of the performance of state schools and private schools in India, the resulting Probe Report described government schools for low-income families as "malfunctioning." When researchers called unannounced at government schools they found "teaching activity" in only 53 percent of the schools, with the head teacher absent a third of the time. However, when they used the same approach at private schools, they reported "feverish classroom activity."

The Probe Report concluded that accountability made the difference: Private schools were successful because they were more accountable.

"The teachers are accountable to the manager (who can fire them) and, through him or her, to the parents (who can withdraw their children)," concluded the report. Similar accountability is missing in government schools, and "this contrast is perceived with crystal clarity by the vast majority of parents."

Accountability in Africa

Across the Indian Ocean on the Horn of Africa, Tooley describes a similar contrast in responsiveness between government and private schools in Boroma, a primitive city of 100,000 in Somaliland. There, private schools outnumber government schools by two to one, with still more being built.

"If we waited for the government to do it, it would take 20 years," Professor Suleyman of Amoud University told Tooley, but "we need schools now."

Besides, added Suleyman, "in government schools teacher absenteeism is rife; in our private schools we have commitment."

"If the evidence reveals that the poorest worldwide are achieving better educational outcomes without the state, then this should inspire and buttress appeals for increased school choice in rich countries," concludes Tooley. 'It also raises anew the question: what on Earth is government doing in education at all?'"

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News.

For more information…

WWW James Tooley's article, "A Lesson from the Third World," published in the January 18, 2003 issue of *The Spectator*, is available online at **http://www.spectator.co.uk/article.php3?table=old&section=back&issue=2003-01-18&id=2690**.

The Web site of the E.G. West Centre for Market Solutions in Education, which studies choice, competition, and entrepreneurship in education, is located at **http://www.ncl.ac.uk/egwest**.

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YOUNG AMERICANS FLUNK GEOGRAPHY

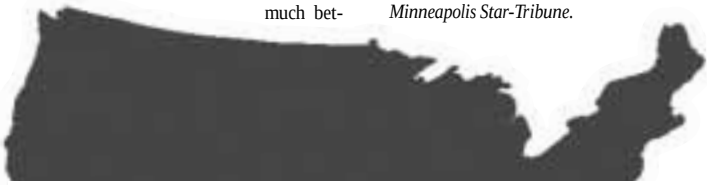
When young American adults were given a map of the United States and asked to find 10 specific states, California and Texas were the only two that could be located by a large majority of those surveyed (89 percent). Almost half (49 percent) could not locate New York, and more than two-thirds (70 percent) could not locate New Jersey.

The Americans, who were surveyed for *National Geographic* by RoperASW, weren't much better at world geography. Only 24 percent were able to locate Saudi Arabia, only 17 percent were able to locate Afghanistan, and just 13 percent could locate Iraq or Iran.

The survey, which involved interviews with more than 300 men and women aged 18 to 24 in nine different countries, asked 56 geographic and current events questions. The top scorer was Sweden, with an average of 40 correct answers, followed by Germany and Italy, who each scored an average of 38. The surveyed Americans averaged only 23 correct answers, while Mexico placed last with just 21.

"If our young people can't find places on a map and lack awareness of current events, how can they understand the world's cultural, economic, and natural resource issues that confront us?" asked John Fahey, president of the National Geographic Society.

Item from the November 20, 2002 issue of the Minneapolis Star-Tribune.



In UNICEF Ranking, U.S. Teens Come in 18th

THE EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE LEAGUE

Average rank in five measures of absolute educational disadvantage

1.4	Korea
2.2	Japan
4.4	Finland
5.0	Canada
6.2	Australia
8.2	Austria
9.4	UK
10.2	Ireland
10.8	Sweden
12.2	Czech Republic
12.2	New Zealand
12.6	France
13.0	Switzerland
14.0	Belgium
14.0	Iceland
14.2	Hungary
14.2	Norway
16.2	USA
17.0	Germany
17.0	Denmark
18.6	Spain
20.2	Italy
23.2	Greece
23.6	Portugal

In the first "big picture" comparison of the relative effectiveness of education systems across the developed world, UNICEF reported the United States came in 18th out of 24 nations when the results from five different international educational studies were combined into a composite average ranking. Two Asian nations—South Korea and Japan—took top honors in the international league table, while Greece and Portugal brought up the rear.

The league table developed in the November 2002 report "is based not on the conventional yardstick of how many students reach what level of education, but on testing what pupils actually know and what they are able to do," said UNICEF.

For more information…

WWW Innocenti Report Card No. 4, *A League Table of Educational Disadvantage in Rich Nations*, was produced by UNICEF in November 2002. The 40-page report is available through *PolicyBot*. Point your Web browser to **www.heartland.org**, click on the *PolicyBot* icon, and search for document #**11553.**

"Overall, these data show that some countries do a very much better job than others in containing educational disadvantage," concluded UNICEF. "A child starting school in Canada, Finland, or Korea, for example, has both a higher probability of reaching a given level of educational achievement and a lower probability of falling well below the average than a child starting school in Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, or the United States."

The measures of student competence used in the UNICEF study are five rankings of the percentage of 14- to 15-year-olds in each nation who fall below international benchmarks of competence in reading, mathematics, and science. These rankings are taken from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS).

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Washington Archdiocese Sets Record Straight

Dr. Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Washington, has responded to criticisms voiced by Peggy Cooper Cafritz at a Cato Institute Policy Forum in December that were printed in last month's issue of School Reform News *("DC Schools Chief Blasts Scholarship Program"). Cafritz charged that privately funded scholarship programs dupe black parents into sending their children to "inferior Catholic schools," and that "The parochial school system in this city has not received the kind of investment from the Catholic Church that's necessary to have sterling schools."*

"We Invest in the Children of Our City"

PATRICIA WEITZEL-O'NEILL

Statements by Peggy Cooper Cafritz, president of the District of Columbia Board of Education, in your article, "DC Schools Chief Blasts Scholarship Program," February 2003, attacking Catholic schools were unfortunate. Also unfortunate was the fact that no comment was sought in response from the Catholic Church.

Not only are all parochial Catholic schools in the District accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, but these schools successfully serve a diverse group of students, more than 65 percent of whom are non-white and 59 percent non-Catholic. We invest in the children of our city. In fall 2002, two new Catholic schools opened in the District for at-risk youth. More than seven D.C. Catholic schools have had major renovations or expansions in the past two years.

Most of the renovations have been made at schools in the Archdiocese of Washington's Center City Consortium, a group of 11 elementary schools in the city's most financially challenged neighborhoods. Nearly 100 percent of Consortium school graduates are accepted at Catholic high schools and nearly 99 percent of our Catholic high school graduates go on to college. Fifty percent of students in our Consortium schools come from families below the poverty level and 70 percent are from single parent homes. Yet these students are excelling and happy.

Public, parochial, private, or charter schools, we all need to work together to give students the best education possible and offer families choices to make sure this happens. We are proud of the faith and values-education we offer our children. Our results speak for themselves.

Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, Ph.D. is Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Washington.

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Charter Law Puts Indianapolis Mayor in Driver's Seat

Detroit executive denied similar authority

KEVIN TEASLEY

Imagine a city where the mayor has the power to start new public schools. Imagine a mayor who can encourage private-sector participation in solving today's education woes. Difficult to imagine? Yes ... but in Indianapolis, that's the reality.

Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson is finishing his first term as mayor of the city known around the world for its annual 500-mile motor race. Democrat Peterson's 1999 campaign included a strong pitch for charter schools. After he won the election, he quickly assembled a staff and lobbying effort to make sure the charter school legislation that passed included a provision authorizing mayors to approve charters.

After a seven-year battle, led primarily by State Senator Teresa S. Lubbers (R-Indianapolis), legislators finally approved a charter school law for Indiana two years ago. The Center for Education Reform ranks the law one of the strongest in the country. But without Peterson's efforts, in public and behind closed doors, to achieve broad support for the proposal, it's unlikely the bill would have been approved by Indiana's Democrat-controlled House and signed by Democrat Governor Frank O'Bannon.

"In the past we did not have strong bipartisan support," noted Lubbers.

Mayor in Control

The new charter school law gave the mayor of Indianapolis unique authority: Peterson became the only mayor in the country with the ability to authorize charter schools. Although a 1998 law gave fellow Democrat Mayor John Norquist authority to approve charters issued by the City of Milwaukee, applications for his approval must first come as recommendations from a seven-member Charter School Review created by city ordinance.

Although Peterson has a similar seven-member Charter Schools Board, he created the board himself, via executive order, shortly after the Hoosier bill was signed into law. The Indianapolis board's function is to advise the mayor on which charter school applications he should approve, and to assist him in holding resulting schools accountable. The board has bipartisan membership.

The mayor's staff provides clear direction to charter applicants. Applicants meet with the mayor's staff for non-binding information exchanges so the mayor can gain as much insight as possible into the intentions and goals of potential school operators—insight that might not come across fairly or clearly in the highly structured setting of a public hearing.

After an application is approved, Peterson's staff provides ongoing support to the new school's staff to ensure all appropriate laws are complied with and all appropriate forms are completed and filed. While this could be viewed as too much oversight, some new charter school providers—including the present writer—welcome such assistance.

"Since charter schools were an integral part of Peterson's winning mayoral campaign, he obviously wants charter schools to succeed and is willing to help them in many ways. But that willingness doesn't include approving schools that are on shaky ground."

Since charter schools were an integral part of Peterson's winning mayoral campaign, he obviously wants charter schools to succeed and is willing to help them in many ways. But that willingness doesn't include approving schools that are on shaky ground. Although the mayor is authorized to charter as many as five schools per year, he hasn't approved the maximum during the first two years of his authority, despite large applicant pools. Out of the first year's 21 applicants, he approved four—including two backed by well-known Republicans. In his second year, he approved just three.

Model for Other States

The Indianapolis charter law has already served as a model for other states, and it is likely to continue to play that role. Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick came within two votes of being accorded similar chartering authority during an extraordinary end-of-year session of the Michigan Senate on December 30. A bill to lift the Wolverine State's charter school cap had been approved by the state House on December 13, when legislators adjourned for the year. Departing Governor John Engler urged a special session to allow the Senate to vote on the bill.

The charter bill contained a bipartisan provision developed by Republican Engler and Democrat Kilpatrick. It would have allowed five new charter schools each year for three years in Detroit, with Kilpatrick controlling the chartering authority. Kilpatrick also would have taken control of the city's reform school board. Although the Republican-controlled Senate voted 18-12 to approve the bill, the measure fell short of the 20 votes necessary for final adoption.

Kevin Teasley is president of the Indianapolis-based Greater Educational Opportunities Foundation and CEO of the 21st Century Charter School. His email address is TeasleyGEO@aol.com.

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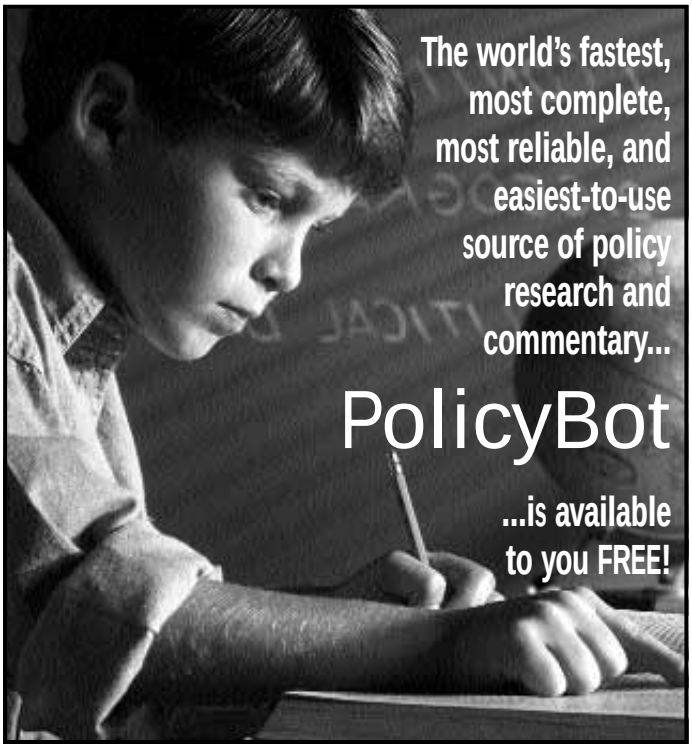
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UNION continued from page 1

sion of at least $5 million in member dues. Then, just before a board meeting to consider a rank-and-file proposal to dissolve the WTU executive board, the AFT's Executive Council appointed an administrator over the local union. This action effectively dissolved WTU's governing bodies, placing day-to-day operations in the hands of AFT Northeast Regional Director George C. Springer, former president of AFT's Connecticut state affiliate.

"Breathtaking" Misappropriation

The extent of the multi-million dollar misappropriation is striking when considered against the union's annual budget of $4.2 million. "How could such an allegedly massive misappropriation of union funds occur over such a long period of time and under the noses of so many people, including the union's board of directors, the union's members, and the American Federation of Teachers, which is the parent organization?" asked the editors of *The Washington Post*, calling the $5 million misappropriation "breathtaking."

But everyone, from the AFT to the WTU vice president to the executive board and staff, all claim to have had no knowledge of the massive spending. Over the same period, health care premiums on behalf of retirees went unpaid, staff pension fund contributions went unpaid, rent and utilities went unpaid, dues reimbursements to site reps never happened, payroll taxes were paid late, and WTU failed to pay its national dues to AFT for more than a year.

For more information…

WWW The entire FBI affidavit, listing the merchandise alleged to have been purchased with teacher union funds, is available on the Web site of *DC Watch* at: **www.dcwatch.com/schools/ps021218.htm**.

AFT claims it threatened to disaffiliate WTU in February 2002 if it did not pay its national dues, but members were not told anything about this at the time.

The FBI reviewed scores of union documents and discovered that meetings minutes, tax returns, and Labor Department disclosure forms contained no mention of the profligate spending. The WTU treasurer and the outside accountant falsified the IRS and Labor Department reports they prepared.

"It's a culture that is just unbelievable—of financial secrecy, of manipulation of information," was how union activist George Parker described the atmosphere at WTU headquarters to *The Washington Post*. "The problem is that everybody just let it happen," he added.

AFT Audit

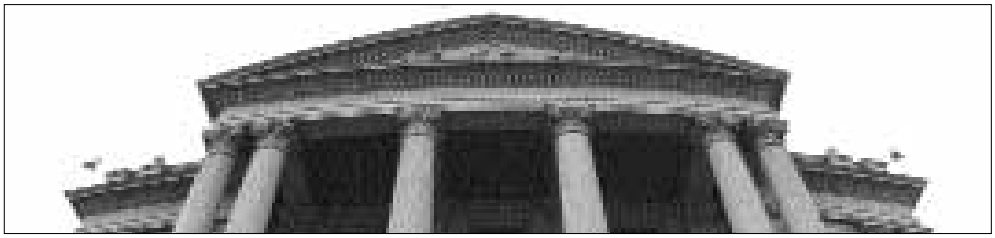
In support of its racketeering lawsuit, the AFT released the report of forensic investigators hired to follow the WTU money trail. The audit revealed details unmentioned even in the FBI affidavit:

- The $144 per member dues overcharge last summer—the event that led to the unraveling of the conspiracy—was an attempt by Bullock to pay off the delinquent AFT national dues WTU owed for at least two years. AFT reported receiving payment of the delinquent dues by July 2002.
- Interim WTU President Esther Hankerson's name was apparently forged on several questionable checks. Hankerson says the bank notified her about one of these and she confronted Bullock (though she told the bank to honor the check). She says Bullock admitted to the deed and said she would reimburse the money, but Hankerson took no further action.
- The AFT audit suggests Bullock and her cohorts may have had a confederate at the bank at which many of the checks were cashed. Scores of checks had the names of legitimate payees crossed out and the name of Bullock's chauffeur written in, yet the bank cashed each one without incident.
- Two political contributions were made with WTU dues, a violation of federal law. One, of $9,000, went to the Democratic National Committee, the other, of $2,000, went to Hillary Clinton's 2000 election campaign. Both returned the money when informed of its origin by AFT.

The auditors also confirmed the obvious: The union's LM-2 report to the U.S. Department of Labor "does not accurately depict the true nature and amount of the transactions that we discovered during our investigation." Also, the accountant who helped prepare and file the reports did so knowing they "were not accurate and, at a minimum, were grossly misleading." The auditors could locate only one LM-2, although they are supposed to be filed annually.

The U.S. Department of Labor has a proposal that would create new reporting requirements for union finances. Not only will unions be required to provide more detailed accounting of their spending, but, for the first time, they also will have to disclose details of the financial trusts they operate. (See sidebar: "Unions to Face Increased Federal Regulation.")

Whatever the outcome for Bullock, Baxter, and Hemphill, AFT members will be footing the bill for their misdeeds. The WTU's fidelity bond covers losses only up to $100,000.



Unions to Face Increased Federal Regulation

MIKE ANTONUCCI

Unions across America are about to learn why many conservatives and libertarians constantly call for smaller government: Regulatory compliance can be hell on your operations. The U.S. Department of Labor released for public comment its newest version of Form LM-2, Labor Organization Annual Report.

The current version requires unions with any members working in the private sector to report their incomes and expenditures in broad categories, and to list the salaries and expenses of their officers and employees.

The new version not only requires a more detailed itemization of expenditures, but also a breakdown of membership numbers by active, associate, and retired status, along with the number of agency fee payers in the organization.

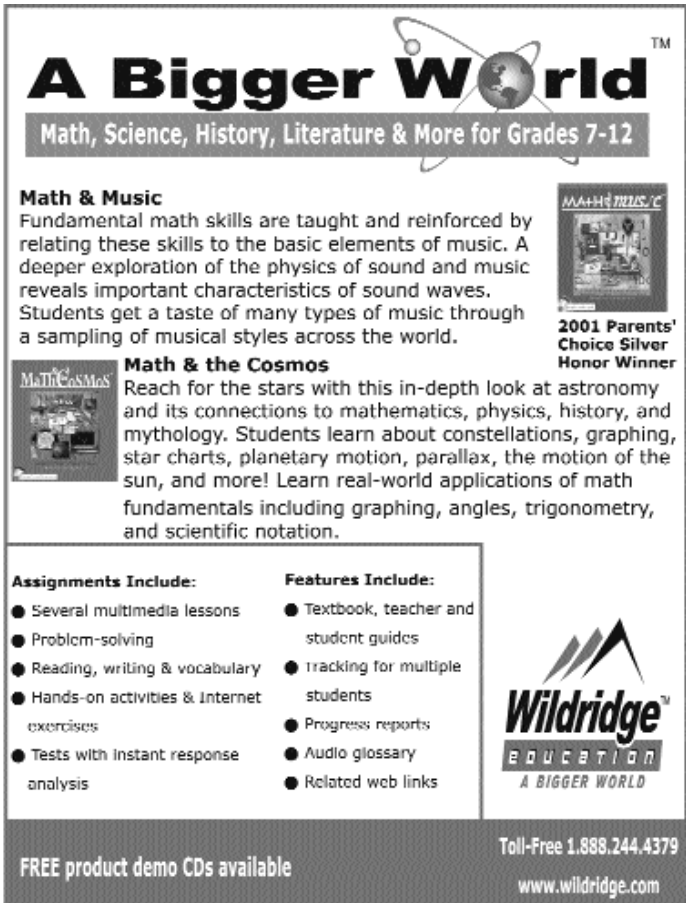
But unions will squawk the loudest over the new requirement to list the percentage of time each union officer and employee worked on contract negotiation, organizing, administration, political activities, and lobbying.

The national offices of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers will have to fill out the new form, but most state affiliates are not subject to the reporting requirements because they represent public employees only. Neither NEA nor AFT has issued a statement about the LM-2 requirements, though any written comments to the Labor Department will become public record and available through the Freedom of Information Act.

For more information…

WWW The new Form LM-2 and instructions are available online at: **http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/28dec20010800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2002/pdf/02-32445.pdf**.

Mike Antonucci is director of the Education Intelligence Agency, which conducts public education research, analysis, and investigations. His e-mail address is EducationIntel@aol.com.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A Work in Progress: State Compliance with NCLB

Most states still have much work to do

GEORGE A. CLOWES

When President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) bill in January 2002, the law established some 40 major compliance requirements in seven different areas, ranging from testing programs and state report cards to school choice provisions and teacher quality requirements.

Now, a year later, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) has developed an easy-to-use online database that provides an ongoing summary of the progress the 50 states and the District of Columbia are making against those 40 measures. It also provides links and references to the detailed legislative authority for each implemented measure.

ECS reports most states still have much work to do to comply with the NCLB law. Overall, only 12 states are on track to comply with just half of the 40 requirements. North Carolina is furthest along, followed closely by Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas. Ten states and the District of Columbia are on track to comply with less than a quarter of the requirements, with Nebraska, New Hampshire, and Oregon on track with only three requirements each. It should be noted that the deadlines for compliance with several requirements are several years into the future.

"ECS reports most states still have much work to do to comply with the NCLB law. Overall, only 12 states are on track to comply with just half of the 40 requirements."

ECS also finds for the states and District of Columbia:

- While 83 percent are on track to establish science standards, only 33 percent or less are on track to establish annual assessments in reading and math.
- Barely half (48 percent) are on track to establish the public school choice provision of NCLB.
- 10 percent or less are on track to develop criteria for unsafe schools or the transfer policy for students in unsafe schools.
- Only 10 percent (five states) are on track to develop a state report card.
- Only one state—Wisconsin—is on track to place a highly qualified teacher in every classroom.

The information in the database represents state laws, departmental regulations, board rules, directives, and practices related to 40 requirements across seven major sections of the NCLB legislation. These baseline data have been compiled by ECS researchers in conjunction with state policymakers and their staffs. The database will be updated frequently as policies change.

According to ECS, the goal of the online database is to provide state policymakers, their staff members, and the public with information about the status of education policy in their state. This information will then meet the following objectives:

- Establish a baseline by which to track policy developments, changes, or enactments in the 50 states and District of Columbia over the coming year.
- Develop a "real-time," nationwide gap analysis of NCLB implementation efforts.
- Provide a means for states and policy organizations to identify technical assistance needs.
- Identify notable policies, programs, or practices that could help individual states address unique cultural or political realities confronting them during implementation.
- Illustrate possible scenarios for meeting NCLB requirements.

For more information…

WWW The online database developed and maintained by the Education Commission of the States, showing state-by-state compliance with the No Child Left Behind law, is available at **http://nclb.ecs.org/nclb**.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. *His email address is* clowes@heartland.org.

Hillsdale College Announces the Seventh Recipient of the $25,000

Henry Salvatori Prize For "Excellence in Teaching"

Each fall, Hillsdale College seeks nominations for the Henry Salvatori Prize for "Excellence in Teaching." This prize honors teachers in grades K-12 who are committed to rigorous standards and to a traditional, time-tested approach to education. Endowed by the late businessman and philanthropist Henry Salvatori, this competition is open to teachers in non-profit private and public schools who have employed the *Hillsdale Academy Reference Guide*. Winners receive a $25,000 cash award payable to their school.

Mr. Micah Porter, of D'Evelyn Junior/Senior High School in Denver, Colorado, is hereby named the recipient of the 2002 Henry Salvatori Prize for "Excellence in Teaching."

The *Hillsdale Academy Reference Guide* is an invaluable resource for teachers, administrators and parents who seek to educate their children in a well-balanced core of essential subjects. Based on the daily operation of Hillsdale Academy, the K-12 model school of Hillsdale College, the *Guide* contains information on curricula, supplementary reading, school culture, and parent and faculty handbooks. It is already in use at over 400 schools in all 50 states nationwide, as well as by countless home-schooling parents.

To learn more about the Henry Salvatori Prize for "Excellence in Teaching" or the *Hillsdale Academy Reference Guide*, call 1-800-989-7323 or log on to www.hillsdale.edu/academy.

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Mr. Micah Porter
D'Evelyn Junior/Senior High School, Denver, Colorado
2002 Recipient of the Henry Salvatori Prize for "Excellence in Teaching"

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The Friedman Report

About the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation

The Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization established in 1996 by Milton and Rose Friedman. The origins of the foundation lie in the Friedmans' long-standing concern about the serious deficiencies in America's elementary and secondary public schools. The best way to improve the quality of education, they believe, is to enable all parents to have a truly free choice of the schools that their children attend. The Friedman Foundation works to build upon this vision, clarify its meaning to the general public, and amplify the national call for true education reform through school choice. Contact us at *www.friedmanfoundation.org* for more information.

The Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation
One American Square #1760
Indianapolis, IN 46282

A Dynamic Duo in Indiana

LAURA J. SWARTLEY

Jackie Cissell and Barato Britt may be on opposite ends of the political-philosophical spectrum, but they are definitely on the same page when it comes to parental choice in education. They describe their relationship as "a team, to the end, no matter what."

Cissell is a self-described "ardent Republican" whose two African-American male children encountered many of the problems in education systemic to that demographic group. She is one of the 17 founders of the national Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) along with Dr. Howard Fuller, one of the fathers of the school choice movement, whom she met 12 years ago. Cissell works on school choice measures from the same ethos as Fuller: equity of educational opportunity.

Her personal life has been a testament to the need for school choice.

"I spent $1,500 at Sylvan Learning Center one summer to get my son caught up to where he should have been, after he was socially promoted for years," said Cissell. "My family has had many of the problems you hear about."

She believes it is deeply wrong that certain groups of people are excluded from the American dream because of failure on the part of the educational establishment. She sees educational choice as the catalyst to solving the underlying problem of disempowerment of low-income parents.

"I get discouraged when we visit housing projects," she said. "The sense of apathy there is palpable."

Britt is an avowed "apolitical person who leans to the left." Cissell's long-time partner in school choice activism, he believes only a successful, broad-based coalition effort—like that demonstrated in Milwaukee—will yield school choice programs.

"We have to get on the same page," he said.

As the president and CEO of BAEO of Indiana Inc., Britt is responsible for coordinating state-level efforts. He works for the Greater Educational Opportunities Foundation in Indianapolis as well, which began its own charter school last year.

Britt is encouraged that his efforts in Indiana have evolved from "just promoting what we *don't* have to defending what we have." To him, this spells progress. Still, he knows there is much more to do. He has been instrumental in having Indianapolis chosen by the national BAEO organization as the site of its 2006 Symposium.

"This will produce a great deal of energy right here in Indiana," he said. The BAEO Symposiums are large-scale outreach events that gather parents, activists, and decision makers in order to galvanize unity in the pursuit of more educational options for black parents.

Britt and Cissell agree that for school choice to become widespread will require a synergy of grassroots support and supportive leadership, in effect a great cooperation between the top and bottom tiers of power. They intentionally work on both ends of this "power continuum," educating legislators and governors about the overwhelming African-American support for school choice and rallying parents to show the desperate need for it.

And, as a team, they promise they won't stop until the job's done.

Laura J. Swartley is communications director with The Milton and Rose Friedman Foundation in Indianapolis, Indiana. Her email address is laura@friedmanfoundation.org.

School Choice Roundup

GEORGE A. CLOWES

ARIZONA

$1,500 Tax Credit Proposed for Homeschoolers

On January 15, Representative Karen S. Johnson (R-18th) introduced House Bill 2260, a measure that would provide a refundable $1,500 tax credit to parents who homeschool their children. If approved, the tax credit would be the largest in the nation for homeschoolers. However, the bill has effectively been tabled for the remainder of the legislative session, apparently in recognition of the fact that the current budget situation may not be the best time to be calling for tax relief.

While expressing some concerns about the refundable element of the proposed tax credit—i.e., providing the full $1,500 credit even to homeschoolers who pay less than $1,500 a year in taxes—the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) suggests the bill is acceptable to most homeschoolers.

Homeschoolers regard it as unfair "double taxation" to pay for the public education system while also paying to privately educate their own children.

Home School Legal Defense Association
January 28, 2003

CALIFORNIA

59 Percent of CSU Freshmen Need Remedial Ed

For freshmen who had ranked in the top third of their high school classes, entering the California State University (CSU) system last Fall was a rude awakening. Almost three out of five of them (59 percent) needed remedial education in mathematics and English, according to a new CSU report.

Although that's better than the 68 percent who required remedial education in 1998, officials suggest part of the "improvement" may be attributed to the recent introduction of a less rigorous mathematics test.

Thirty-seven percent of the freshmen were not proficient in mathematics, down nine percentage points from last year. But 49 percent of freshmen lacked proficiency in English, up three points from last year.

Although 40 percent of CSU's students come from homes where English is not the primary language, that can't be used as an excuse, said executive vice chancellor David Spence. He said CSU would pilot a high school program to better identify students in need of remedial help ... before they enter college.

Sacramento Bee
January 29, 2003

FRIEDMAN continued on page 10

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The Friedman Report

CONTINUED

Alliance Plans Network of Charter Schools

Community leaders seeking to reform the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) have tried a variety of approaches, from vouchers to breaking up the district, all to no avail. Vouchers were rejected twice by voters and a break-up was rejected by district officials. Parents and reformers now have turned to charter schools.

More than 50 charter schools now operate in the Los Angeles area, enrolling 27,800 students from predominantly poor neighborhoods. Charter schools also are expanding rapidly, with LAUSD expecting applications for starting 15 to 20 more charters this year alone. The most ambitious expansion plans come from the Alliance for Student Achievement, a nonprofit group of the city's civic leaders, which aims to serve 50,000 students within five years in a network of charter schools.

"The charter movement is at a point right now where there are tremendous successes in independent isolated charters," LAUSD school board president Caprice Young, an Alliance supporter, told *The Los Angeles Daily News*. "In order to become a real force for change in the broader educational system, they are going to have to learn how to franchise themselves, clone themselves."

While the LAUSD superintendent was non-committal about the proposal, teacher union president John Perez voiced his disapproval, saying it "sets up private schools with public money."

Los Angeles Daily News
January 21, 2003

COLORADO

Voucher Plans Advance

In early February, the Senate Education Committee approved Senate Bill 77, a pilot school voucher plan sponsored by Sen. Ed Jones (R-Colorado Springs). The measure would allow low-income children in poorly performing public schools to attend a nonpublic school, using vouchers worth up to $5,200. However, action on Jones' second voucher bill, Senate Bill 99, was delayed after Sen. Bruce Cairns (R-Aurora) said he could not support the bill unless it allowed for religious considerations in school choice.

Phil Fox, deputy director of the Colorado Association of School Executives, said any voucher program should call for students to take statewide assessment tests.

In the House, the Education Committee approved House Bill 1160, sponsored by Rep. Nancy Spence (R-Centennial), and House Bill 1137, sponsored by Rep. Keith King (R-Colorado Springs). Spence's measure, designed for low-income students, would establish a pilot voucher program for students to receive state-funded school vouchers so they could attend a private school of their own choice. King's bill would provide up to $20 million a year in income tax credits to people who donate money to nonprofit organizations that provide scholarships for use in public and private schools.

Opponents contended Spence's bill would violate the required separation of church and state, but Alex Cranberg, head of a K-12 scholarship program, disagreed. He pointed out that other government programs, such as health care, provide money to hospitals run by religious organizations.

Opponents also charge participating private schools would lack accountability since they would not be required to publish student test scores nor to provide details of how they spent the voucher funds they received.

www.state.co.us/gov_dir/stateleg.html
Casper Star-Tribune
February 1, 2003
February 3, 2003

FLORIDA

Bush: Use Vouchers to Reduce Class Size

When Florida voters approved a class-size reduction mandate last November, they also handed Governor Jeb Bush—who had opposed the mandate—the job of getting rid of the Sunshine State's overcrowded classrooms. The mandate—Constitutional Amendment 9—requires the state to provide enough money to enable public schools to cap classes at the following levels by 2010:

- Grades K-3: 18 students;
- Grades 4-8: 22 students; and
- Grades 9-12: 25 students.

Seeking ways to fold the mandate's first year $3 billion cost into his 2003-04 state budget, Bush in January suggested giving local school boards the authority to offer vouchers to students in overcrowded public schools so they could transfer to private schools. It would cost the state less to send students to private schools than to educate them in public schools.

"It's a cost-effective way of dealing with this issue," Bush told *The Miami Herald*. "Many [districts] won't take it, but so what? That option should be there for them to consider."

Bush's proposal faces sharp opposition from Democrats and a cool reception even from some of his fellow Republicans. A bill embodying a similar proposal, filed in January by GOP Rep. Stan Jordan, still lacks a Senate sponsor.

Miami Herald
January 24, 2003

Social Promotion Over for Third Graders

Third grade enrollment in Florida's public schools is expected to balloon sharply next fall as a new law bars teachers from promoting students who score at the lowest level on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The law aims to meet Governor Jeb Bush's goal of having all third-graders read. Most teachers oppose having students repeat a grade on the grounds it damages their self-esteem.

When a similar bar was in place for fourth-graders last year, teachers routinely used their discretion to promote all but a few low-scoring students to fifth grade. The new law removes that discretion. Even special education students must now score at the same level required of other students before being promoted.

How many students could be held back? In Broward County last year, nearly a quarter of third-graders scored at Level 1 of the FCAT. In Miami-Dade, it was almost one-third.

Miami Herald
January 20, 2003

LOUISIANA

Catholics and Governor Seek Vouchers

As part of his legislative agenda for this year, Louisiana Governor Mike Foster will support a plan to allow students to attend private secular or religious schools with state-funded vouchers, according to an outline of his proposals revealed in early February. Andy Kopplin, the Republican governor's chief of staff, said the vouchers would be limited to students in schools designated as failing by the state's accountability rating system. Most of those schools are in Orleans Parish.

Participating private schools would be required to embrace elements of the state accountability plan. Requirements would include publishing test scores and administering the Louisiana accountability and testing program to students within three years.

Ten days earlier, Louisiana Roman Catholic leaders had met to discuss plans for capitalizing on last year's favorable ruling on school vouchers by the U.S. Supreme Court. This year, the aim is to persuade lawmakers to approve vouchers strictly for children in failing schools, which would limit the program largely to New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Once the limited program was in place, efforts would be directed to authorizing vouchers for all children in public schools.

"Any parent could choose and take the voucher to the school of their choice," said Danny Loar, executive director of Louisiana Citizens for Educational Freedom, a group that backs vouchers as a way to give families more choices in education.

This year's proposed legislation will be modeled after the Cleveland program that was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Under the plan, parents of children in failing schools would get $3,000—half the $6,000 cost per student in Orleans Parish—to use for tuition at another public or private school, or for tutoring at their present school. The other $3,000 would remain with the local school district.

Louisiana has one of the highest private school enrollment rates in the nation, with over 16 percent of students in the Pelican State attending nonpublic schools.

Baton Rouge Advocate
January 23, 2003
WBZR-ABC Channel 2 Louisiana
February 3, 2003

MAINE

Parents Fight Proposal to Eliminate School Choice

Parents in Holden, Eddington, and Clifton are fighting to keep a school voucher program that has been a state tradition for more than a hundred years. Towns in Maine without a school of their own pay tuition for students to attend a secular private school or a public school in another town. Parents usually make the choice of school, but sometimes a town contracts for all children to attend a specific school.

In School Administrative District 63, parents have made the choice of school for their children, with the town paying the tuition. While children from SAD 63 attend a total of seven schools, more than half choose Brewer High School, a public school, and more than a third choose John Bapst Memorial High School, a private school.

But in January, SAD 63's board of directors proposed signing a 10-year contract to send all students to Brewer—"to save money," according to board chairman Don Varnum. While Brewer would charge 95 to 99 percent of the state average tuition for each student, the net cost for a student to attend John Bapst would be approximately 105 percent of the state average tuition. The contract would save SAD 63 about $40,000 a year for the 136 students currently attending John Bapst.

Clare Payne, a John Bapst trustee whose son and daughter attended the school under the school choice program, opposes the change, saying it reduces the freedom of parents to choose their child's school.

"We moved to Holden 12 years ago, and one of the reasons we

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moved there is to have a school choice," Payne told the *Bangor Daily News*. "Everybody in the national media has been talking about vouchers, and we have our own approved state voucher system."

Bangor Daily News
January 24, 2003

For more information...

WWW A recent study by the Milton and Rose Friedman Foundation found the school choice program in Maine results in improved student academic performance at a significant savings to taxpayers: **www.friedmanfoundation.org/news/2002-02-05.html**.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Education Certificate Would Allow Parents to Choose Schools

New Hampshire State Representative Kenneth Weyler (R-Kingston) is sponsoring a bill to establish an education certificate program in the state department of education to enable parents to send their child to the school of their choice. Parents of all school-age children in grades K-12 would be eligible to receive, upon request, a certificate to be used for necessary education expenses at non-public and homeschools up to the value of the certificate.

The value of the certificate for an individual pupil would be based on the cost of an adequate education in the town where the pupil resides, as determined by the general court in the fiscal year for which the certificate is requested. Certificates could not be redeemed for more than the amount of tuition and fees at the non-public school. In the case of homeschooled students, the redemption value of the certificate could not exceed $1,000.

Among the benefits of education certificates cited by Weyler are:

- financial freedom for parents to choose schools best suited to their educational philosophy and their child's needs and talents;
- competition among schools to improve cost-effectiveness and quality;
- establishment of diverse learning environments designed to meet children's individual educational needs.

Although participating private schools would not be permitted to discriminate in enrollment on the basis of race, sex, or creed, the admissions criteria for certificate-redeeming children should be consistent with the admissions criteria the individual schools regularly apply. Moreover, no additional regulations would be imposed on participating schools, which would be permitted flexibility to educate pupils in accordance with the educational mission of each school.

Education Certificate Act (LSR 218)
January 30, 2003

MINNESOTA

New Education Commissioner Seen As "Change Agent"

When Minnesota's new Republican Governor Tim Pawlenty appointed former Virginia deputy education secretary Cheri Pierson Yecke as his new Education Commissioner in January, he called her a "change agent." As a member of the state Board of Education in Virginia, Yecke persuaded the board not to apply for Goals 2000 funds, arguing it would give the federal government too much control over the state's education standards. She was a strong advocate for Virginia's Standards of Learning and associated tests.

Yecke also wrote a report card saying there was no correlation between school spending and educational results. In that report card, she advocated a pilot school choice program to allow low-income parents in poor urban areas "to send their children to the school of their choice—be it public, private, or parochial." Empirical evidence, she noted, showed the value of school choice in increasing student achievement.

When questioned by Minnesota educators about the voucher issue in January, Yecke said Pawlenty isn't likely to pursue vouchers in the immediate future. However, all school options should be on the table, she added.

During last fall's gubernatorial campaign, critics claimed vouchers would allow private schools to enroll the best students, leaving failing public schools with the children most difficult to educate. OK, said Pawlenty, then let's offer vouchers only to children who have failed repeatedly or have special needs their public school can't meet.

Pioneer Press
January 5, 2003
Minneapolis Star-Tribune
February 3, 2003

NEW YORK

Buffalo Plan Aimed at Parents, Competition

Under a new public school choice program, parents in the City of Buffalo, New York will be able to choose which school their child attends this fall. Initially, the program is open only to approximately 4,500 children entering first grade or earlier, but the longer-term plan is to allow all families in the city to choose their children's schools rather than have City Hall make that assignment.

In the past, attendance zones spawned by a court-imposed desegregation plan often required children to take long bus rides to get to their assigned school. But after the desegregation plan was lifted several years ago, surveys showed parents wanted more say in which school their children attended and wanted an elementary school closer to home.

"If having young children close to home is important, now there is the opportunity to have that," student placement director Diane Cozzo told *The Buffalo News*. "If having them close to a parent's work or day care provider is more important to them, they can have that. If the [educational] program is most important, they can make their choice accordingly."

The plan is part of a larger effort for the city's schools to compete successfully with other educational options available to parents, such as charter schools, parochial schools, secular private schools, and suburban public schools.

"For our district to succeed, we need to be able to offer parents a menu of educational opportunities for their children," said school board member Jan Peters.

Buffalo News
January 2, 2003

OHIO

Charter School Employees Unionize

On January 17, Summit Academy Canton become the first charter school in Ohio with a union when a majority of the school's staff voted to join the Ohio Association of Public School Employees (OAPSE). One of the largest bargaining groups in the state, OAPSE is part of the Coalition for Public Education, which has filed a lawsuit against Ohio charter schools, alleging they are operating under lax

FRIEDMAN continued on page 12

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and unfair regulations relative to traditional public schools.

"It's a curiosity to me," Summit Academy founder and CEO Peter DiMezza told the *Beacon Journal*. "Are they saying they want this community school to continue and thrive and succeed? If so, why are they involved in a lawsuit that says the opposite?"

OAPSE spokesman Mark Hatch said the union is part of the lawsuit because of concern about the lack of regulations on charter schools. However, he contended having a union would make charter schools more accountable and help alleviate the lack of regulations.

Beacon Journal
January 22, 2003

OREGON

Parents Want Private Schools, Not Tax Hike

Interest in Oregon's private schools jumped in the weeks preceding a January 28 statewide referendum on a temporary tax increase. Although voters rejected the proposal, Measure 28, by a 55-45 margin, the predictions of public school budget woes aired in the weeks before the vote apparently resonated with parents and prompted them to look for ways to avoid those problems. Private school administrators reported an increase in applications and phone calls as well as higher attendance at their open houses and increased hits to their Web sites.

"I am hearing parents say they are concerned about the number of school days being cut, and the number of kids in their classes, when they are hearing rumors about class sizes as high as 35 or 40," the admissions director at St. Mary's Catholic School in Medford, Bramble Buran, told *The Seattle Times*.

"We've got people thinking about paying tuition who never thought they would be considering it," noted Ron Sobel, admissions director at the Catlin Gabel School in Portland, where high school tuition is $16,000.

The Seattle Times
January 27, 2003
January 29, 2003

SOUTH CAROLINA

Sanford Stresses Education

In his first State of the State address in January, newly inaugurated Republican Governor Mark Sanford concentrated on themes from his campaign when he addressed education issues. These included increasing the number of charter schools, improving school discipline, and consolidating state education spending. But one campaign theme went unmentioned: providing state-funded school vouchers to allow students at failing public schools to transfer to private schools.

With state revenues estimated to fall almost $1 billion short of state spending, Sanford said it would be misleading to present "a laundry list of new programs, regardless of the budget capacity to support them." In fact, he warned, "little can be done about so many of the issues that we care about until we address the budget."

The State
January 23, 2003

TEXAS

Vouchers Gain Momentum

"I think the most important issue facing us in the Legislature is the sad, sorry, despicable, deplorable, horrible, monstrous, state of affairs of our public schools," declared Texas State Rep. Ron Wilson (D-Houston), speaking to a largely conservative audience at a conference hosted by the Texas Public Policy Foundation at the end of January.

One of Wilson's proposals for beginning to address that state of affairs is through school vouchers, and at the forum he promoted legislation he has introduced in the House to create a pilot voucher program to target children in Houston. He believes the Republican leadership in the legislature has improved the chances of his bill being approved. Governor Rick Perry, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst, and House Speaker Tom Craddick all are on record as favoring a pilot voucher program.

Under Wilson's bill, HB 293, eligible students would include low-income children, children entering kindergarten or first grade, and children who have failed state tests. Private schools that accept vouchers could not refuse to enroll a child because of race, religion, residence, national origin, ethnic background, disability, or academic achievement.

Wilson's bill requires voucher students to take the same tests as students in public schools—the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Donna Garner, a teacher at Temple Central Christian School in Hewitt, Texas, who taught for 27 years in Texas Public Schools, warns this would result in the private schools abandoning their own curriculum and using the same curriculum as the public schools.

www.belogical.com
January 13, 2003
WOAI Radio, San Antonio
January 29, 2003

UTAH

Governor Opposes Tax Credit Plan

Although supporters applauded when the 4-2 vote of a Utah Senate committee on January 29 advanced a tuition tax credit bill to the Senate floor, opponents also chalked up two important gains over the next three days.

The next day, a House committee voted 7-4 in favor of House Bill 195, a precursor of House Resolution 3, which would ask voters in November 2004 if they support a tax break for private education. Educators and lawmakers who oppose tax credits support this bill.

The bill's sponsor, Rep Sheryl Allen (R-Bountiful), said it is important to get guidance from taxpayers regarding changes in tax policy, but Rep. Jim Ferrin (R-Orem) viewed it differently.

"Promoting this bill is more for the cause of anti-tuition tax credit, instead of what people's feelings may be," he said.

The second setback for tax credit supporters came on February 1, when GOP Governor Michael Leavitt declared his opposition to the proposed tax credit. He also warned lawmakers against including the proposal with other legislation.

The tax credit bill, SB 34, is sponsored by Sen. Chris Buttars (R-West Jordan) and would provide parents with a state income tax credit of $3,132 per child for private school tuition. It also would allow individuals and businesses the same amount of credit for donations to private school scholarship organizations. Sen. Thomas Hatch (R-Panguitch) suggested combining SB 34 with a reform bill he is introducing to implement recommendations of the Employers' Education Coalition, a governor-appointed task force.

"If the system of public education were adequately funded and we had information I thought was reliable on what the outcome of this was going to be, I would be prepared to experiment with tax credits," Leavitt told *The Salt Lake Tribune*. "But we are talking about a system that is 40 percent below average."

The Salt Lake Tribune
January 30, 2003
January 31, 2003
February 2, 2003

WISCONSIN

Open Enrollment Brings Competition

Under Wisconsin's open enrollment program, students are allowed to apply to enroll in any three public school districts, taking with them more than $5,000 in state aid from their home district. The program, launched in 1998-99, saw an estimated 12,000 students enrolled outside their home districts this year, taking more than $62 million with them.

In response, some schools are turning to marketing techniques to attract students from other districts while persuading their own students to stay.

"It's $5,000 per student and, with the budget as tight as it is, that's income," Mukwonago School District Superintendent Paul Strobel told the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*. He has taken out ads in several local newspapers to get the word out to parents outside the district.

In 2001-02, the St. Francis School District received the most money—$825,000—in additional state aid for the students it gained, while the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) took the biggest loss, forfeiting more than $6 million for the students it lost.

After the Waukesha School District lost 90 students in the current school year, school officials responded by producing a new, glossy newsletter. MPS's Don Hoffman said the district has to market itself.

"If we do not market ourselves, if we do not compete the way charter schools and Catholic schools compete for kids, we are dead in the water," he said.

Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel
February 3, 2003

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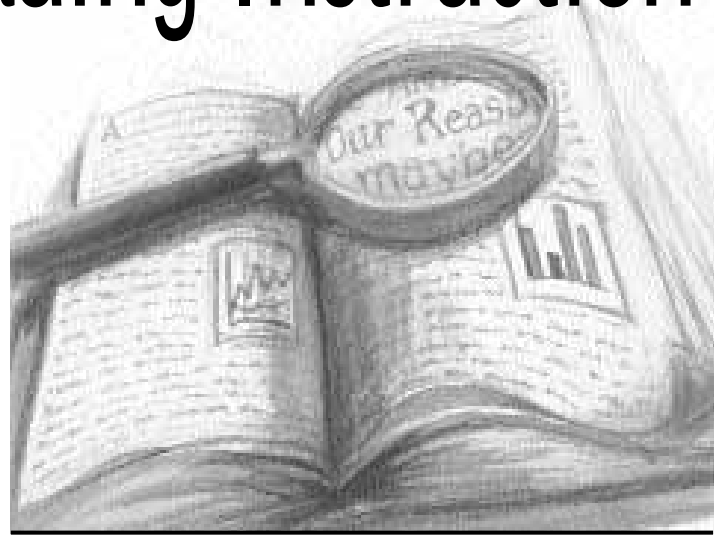
10 Myths of Reading Instruction

Damaging misconceptions leave children with poor reading skills



SEBASTIAN WREN

Managing Editor's note: This is a condensed version of a more detailed article available under the same title at the Web site of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory at http://www.sedl.org/reading/topics/myths.html.

It has often been suggested that children will learn to read if they are simply immersed in a literacy-rich environment and allowed to develop literacy skills in their own way. This belief that learning to read is a natural process that comes from rich text experiences is surprisingly prevalent in education despite the fact that learning to read is about as natural as learning to juggle blindfolded while riding a unicycle backwards.

Myth #1 - Learning to read is a natural process

Learning to understand speech is a natural process and, given the opportunity, children will naturally develop rudimentary language comprehension skills with little structured or formal guidance. Reading acquisition, by contrast, is not at all natural.

While the ability to understand speech evolved over many, many thousands of years, reading and writing were invented by man and have only been around for a few thousand years. Reading and writing simply have not existed long enough to be described as a "natural" phenomenon.

Clearly, if reading was natural, everybody would be doing it, and we would not have to worry so much about dealing with a "literacy crisis."

Myth #2 - Children will eventually learn to read if given enough time

Many who claim reading is natural also claim children need to be given time to develop their reading skills at their own pace. But over time, the gap between children who have well-developed literacy skills and those who do not gets wider and wider.

At the early grades, the "literacy gap" is relatively easy to cross. However, if literacy instruction needs are not met early, then the gap widens until it gets so wide that bridging it requires extensive, intensive, expensive, and frustrating remedial instruction.

The gap reaches this nearly insurmountable point very early, and research has shown that if a child is not reading grade-appropriate materials by the time he or she is in the fourth grade, the odds of that child ever developing good reading skills are very slim.

Myth #3 - Reading programs are "successful"

There is no reading program that, by itself, will even come close to ensuring high levels of reading success for all children. There are a few programs that, if properly implemented, could help a school to move in the right direction, but nothing could ever take the place of a knowledgeable and talented teacher.

Myth #4 - We used to do a better job of teaching children to read

Nothing illustrates this better than the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which has been given to children across the country aged 9, 13, and 17 since 1970.

Student performance at those three age levels has not changed substantially in more than 30 years—consistently, depending on the age tested, between 24 and 39 percent of students have scored in the "below basic" category, and between 3 and 7 percent have scored in the "advanced" category.

> "[I]f literacy instruction needs are not met early, then the gap widens until it gets so wide that bridging it requires extensive, intensive, expensive, and frustrating remedial instruction."

Myth #5 - Skilled reading involves using syntactic and semantic cues to "guess" words, and good readers make many "mistakes" as they read authentic text

Research indicates that both of these claims are quite wrong. Repeated studies have shown that only poor readers depend upon context to try to "guess" words in text—good readers depend heavily upon the visual information contained in the words themselves (i.e. the letter / word cues) to quickly and automatically identify the word. Good readers make virtually no mistakes as they read because they have developed extremely effective and efficient word identification skills that do not depend upon semantics/context or syntax.

Myth #6 - Research can be used to support whatever your beliefs are: Lots of programs are "research based"

It is true that new "research-based" fads and programs come and go, but that stems from a misuse of the term "research-based." All of us need to adopt a bit of healthy skepticism, and we need to demand that a substantial research base be provided as evidence to support claims.

Myth #7 - Phoneme awareness is a consequence (not a cause) of reading acquisition

The evidence showing the importance of phoneme awareness to literacy acquisition is overwhelming. It is quite clear that phoneme awareness is a necessary pre-requisite for developing decoding skills in an alphabetic writing system such as English.

Phoneme awareness in the early grades is one of the best predictors of future reading success. All successful readers have phoneme awareness. People who do not have phoneme awareness are always poor readers, and poor readers almost never have phoneme awareness.

Myth #8 - Some people are just genetically "dyslexic"

Frankly, the term "dyslexia" is basically meaningless. The term simply means "difficulty with words," and anybody who has not learned to read could be called "dyslexic."

Myth #9 - Short-term tutoring for struggling readers can get them caught up with their peers, and the gains will be sustained

The gains made by children in pull-out tutoring programs are not sustained for very long once they are exited from the program. This suggests there is something about the classroom environment that is not supporting and scaffolding these children as they learn to read. Studies have shown that the best hope for these children is to place them with a "strong" reading teacher full time.

For more information…

WWW Sebastian Wren's article on the mechanics of reading, "The Cognitive Foundations of Learning to Read: A Framework," is available at the Web site of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory at **http://www.sedl.org/reading/framework.**

Myth #10 - If it is in the curriculum, then the children will learn it, and a balanced reading curriculum is ideal

This is only a half-myth. Clearly, if something is not a part of the curriculum, then children are very unlikely to learn it, but just because a concept or skill is taught, there is no guarantee every child will learn it.

According to data collected for the NAEP in reading, the prevalent instructional philosophy shifted in 1996 from Whole Language to Balanced Literacy, but NAEP scores have been unaffected by this shift. When the prevalent philosophy shifted in the late '80s and early '90s from Phonics to Whole Language, NAEP scores did not change then either. It would seem the philosophies that drive the curricula simply do not in themselves have an impact on student performance.

What does have an impact on student performance is the quality, strength, knowledge, and sophistication of the teacher. That is what really matters for helping children to become proficient readers.

Sebastian Wren is a program associate with the Southwestern Educational Development Laboratory, where he develops and tests resources for reading instruction. His email address is swren@sedl.org.

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New Books on Education Reform

COMPILED BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

A Primer on America's Schools

Edited by Terry M. Moe
Hoover Institution, 2001
324 pages, $15.00 paperback
ISBN 0-8179-9942-6

Edited by Stanford University political science professor Terry M. Moe, this book is the first of several planned publications from the Hoover Institution's Koret Task Force, a five-year effort initiated in 1999 to address key problems in K-12 U.S. education and identify potential policies for improvement. The Task Force consists of 11 recognized scholars in various aspects of K-12 education. Each has a chapter in the book.

U.S. education, says Moe, is "in a crisis of quality. But it is also a crisis of social equity: the children who most desperately need ... opportunity—who are mainly poor and minority—are without hope in the absence of major reform." Each chapter introduces a key issue and examines how Americans might "get off the treadmill of failed reforms" and promote the cause of real progress.

Moe himself writes a chapter about the teacher unions. Other contributors include Diane Ravitch (traditions in American education), John E. Chubb (the system), Eric A. Hanushek (school spending), E.D. Hirsch (curriculum), Williamson M. Evers (standards and accountability), Herbert J. Walberg (student achievement), Chester E. Finn Jr. (teachers), and Paul E. Peterson (school choice).

School Reform: The Critical Issues

Edited by Williamson M. Evers, Lance T. Izumi, and Pamela A. Riley
Hoover Institution and Pacific Research Institute
November 2001
438 pages, $15.00 paperback
ISBN 0-8179-2872-3

Education reform covers such a wide range of topics—from teaching styles and parental involvement to class size and teacher testing—that it is a challenge even for those following one aspect of reform to keep abreast of the developments in a multitude of other areas. This book, a joint undertaking of the Hoover Institution and Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy (PRI), attempts to fill that gap by having more than 50 expert contributors address education reform from their individual perspectives.

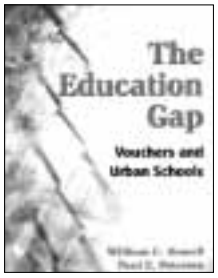
School Reform: The Critical Issues, edited by Williamson Evers of the Hoover Institution and Lance Izumi and Pamela Riley of PRI, includes articles on the following topics:

- the pitfalls of "progressive" education, and a strategy for supporting a more traditional approach;
- student responsibility and character education—why school reform requires students of good character;
- teacher testing and evaluation, and why it's so difficult to fire bad teachers;
- how the federal government spent $118 million on Title I to close the achievement gap, and failed.

Contributors include Lynne V. Cheney, Paul Ciotti, Milton Friedman, David Gelernter, Jerry Jesness, Alveda C. King, Tom Loveless, Heather MacDonald, La Rae G. Munk, Lewis J. Perelman, Michael J. Petrilli, Debra J. Saunders, Brother Bob Smith, Thomas Sowell, Sol Stern, Abigail Thernstrom, and Joseph P. Viteritti.

The Education Gap—Vouchers and Urban Schools

William G. Howell and Paul E. Peterson
The Brookings Institution, 2002
288 pages, $28.95 cloth
ISBN 0-8157-0214-0



In *The Education Gap—Vouchers and Urban Schools*, political science professor William Howell of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Harvard University professor of government Paul Peterson report new findings drawn from a massive and comprehensive study on vouchers. Patrick Wolf of Georgetown University and David Campbell of Princeton University are co-authors.

The book presents data from randomized field trials conducted in New York City; Dayton, Ohio; and Washington, D.C. It also includes a randomized field trial evaluation of a program that offered vouchers to 40,000 low-income families nationwide. Findings from a voucher initiative in the Edgewood school district in San Antonio also are presented.

Findings were quite consistent across the field trials, despite the variety of settings. Combined results for New York, Dayton, and Washington showed that black students participating in voucher programs on average scored three percentile points higher than their public school peers in the first year, six points higher in the second year, and seven points higher in the third year. The test score differences in years two and three were statistically significant.

The scores of other students in public and private schools did not differ significantly from one another in any city or any year. The authors suggest that because the educational options available to black Americans are more limited, new forms of choice—such as vouchers—are most likely to benefit black students. Vouchers thus may help close the achievement gap found nationwide between black and white students.

The findings from this research also provide new insight into how existing voucher programs affect other aspects of students' educational experiences—factors such as school climate, school resources, class size, and homework. In addition, the findings reveal how vouchers affect racial segregation, political tolerance, parental satisfaction, children's self-esteem, school-family communication, and community social capital.

"This study is based on the best experimental arrangements on voucher programs to date," commented Milwaukee voucher researcher John Witte of the University of Wisconsin, a sentiment echoed by class size researcher Alan B. Krueger of Princeton University.

"Because of the strength of its research design and the daunting financial and administrative hurdles facing anyone who tries to launch another randomized evaluation of vouchers, *The Education Gap* will provide an important intellectual battleground for the debate over vouchers for years to come," noted Krueger.

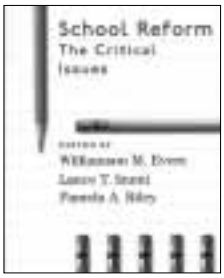
Can the Market Save Our Schools?

Edited by Claudia R. Hepburn
Fraser Institute, Canada, 2001
193 pages, paperback
ISBN 0-8897-5185-4

A spring 2000 Fraser Institute conference in Vancouver addressed the question: Could school reforms based on the market—i.e., competition—benefit the Canadian education system of public education?

The ten papers presented at that conference are now available in the book *Can the Market Save Our Schools?* Although the lessons are for Canadians, they make enlightening reading for Americans, since many of the lessons are in fact derived from research carried out in the United States.

Contributors whose names will be familiar to American school reformers include Harvard University economist Caroline M. Hoxby, Fordham Foundation president Chester E. Finn, Jr., Manhattan Institute senior fellow Jay P. Greene, Bowling Green State University senior research associate Andrew J. Coulson, Indianapolis scholarship parent Barbara Lewis, and Indianapolis scholarship student Alphonso Harrell.



The problems experienced in education systems north of the border appear strikingly similar to those in the U.S. For example, in his paper "Publicly Funded Education in Ontario: Breaking the Deadlock," William Robson focuses on the province's persistent achievement gap between children from low-income families and those from higher-income families. Robson, director of the Ontario Coalition for Education Reform, recommends reforms to enhance parental empowerment as the solution.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. *His email address is* clowes@heartland.org.

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CHOICE continued from page 1

than hurting them.

The study, *Rising to the Challenge: The Effect of School Choice on Public Schools in Milwaukee and San Antonio*, focuses on the impact of school choice on public school student achievement in two cities with different types of parental choice programs. After controlling for demographic characteristics, like race and income, and for local spending differences, the study's authors, Manhattan Institute scholars Jay P. Greene, Ph.D. and Greg Forster, Ph.D., found academic improvement in public schools exposed to private school scholarship and charter school programs.

Privately Funded Vouchers: Edgewood

The authors first examined the impact of a privately funded voucher program on the Edgewood school district, a small district in San Antonio, Texas. All Edgewood students are eligible for scholarships to attend a private school or public school in another district. A private organization has funded those scholarships since 1998. Most of the district's students are Hispanic and low income.

Greene and Forster compared the Edgewood district's scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) from 1998 to 2001 with those of other districts and groups. After controlling for resource and demographic characteristics, they found Edgewood's student improvement on the TAAS test over the four-year period exceeded or was equal to the improvement registered in 85 percent of Texas's school districts.

"Empowering parents with the authority to choose schools prompts public schools to improve, helping students rather than hurting them."

The Edgewood students also fared well when compared to other Hispanic and low-income populations: They ranked at the 73rd percentile of Hispanic students statewide and 75th percentile of low-income students.

Publicly Funded Vouchers: Milwaukee

The researchers also examined the impact of publicly funded vouchers and charter schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where they discovered similar positive impacts from school choice. Milwaukee students are eligible for state-issued vouchers to attend private schools. They also have a range of charter schools from which to choose.

Greene and Forster examined school test scores during the period 1996-97 and 2000-01. After controlling for demographics and resources, they found the following:

- Among elementary schools, improvement in test scores was positively related to the number of students in the school eligible for vouchers: the more voucher-eligible students, the faster the rise in test scores.
- Charter school competition had no significant effect on public school achievement at the elementary school level (4th grade).
- In high school (10th grade), charter school competition had a positive impact, while private school competition had no effect.
- In middle school (8th grade), neither private nor charter school competition had an impact.

The Manhattan Institute researchers estimated the degree of charter school competition by indexing the distance between a traditional public school and the three nearest charter schools. The closer the nearest three charter schools were to a given public school, the larger the amount of competition that public school faced from charter schools.

Greene and Forster found that, on average, if a school faced only one charter school located 5 km away its achievement increased by 3.5 points during the study period. However, if a charter school was only 1 km away, the traditional public school experienced a 9-point increase in test scores.

That competition from vouchers and charter schools should affect different grade levels differently is not surprising, note the authors, given the higher supply of private elementary schools.

"In light of this fact, the discrepancy between our results for 4th grade, 8th grade, and 10th grade is less mystifying," they write. "[P]rivate-school competition seems to apply more competitive pressure on public schools at the elementary level, where there are more private elementary schools for parents to choose from, and less competitive pressure at the middle and high school level, where charter schools take up some of the slack caused by the smaller number of private options available.

"At the elementary level," they continue, "the level at which both private and charter competition are available, private schools rather than charter schools seem to drive public school improvements."

For more information…

WWW *Rising to the Challenge: The Effect of School Choice on Public Schools in Milwaukee and San Antonio*, by Jay P. Greene and Greg Forster, is available on the Manhattan Institute's Web site at **http://www.manhattaninstitute.org/html/cb_27.htm**.

The 12-page study is also available through *PolicyBot*. Point your Web browser to **http://www.heartland.org**, click on the *PolicyBot* icon, and search for document #**11554**.

Growing Body of Research

The Greene and Forster study, released in October 2002, builds on a growing body of research demonstrating improved public school productivity as a result of competition from choice programs. Such research dispels the myth that choice has a negative effect on students who remain in public schools.

As Greene and Forster point out, "because public schools do not want to lose students (and the revenue students generate) to private schools, they can be expected to respond constructively to the presence of school choice programs, providing better educational services in order to reduce the number of students who choose to exercise their option to leave the public school system."

In an earlier study, Greene found Florida public schools increased their academic achievement when threatened with a loss of students and funding. Under Florida's A+ voucher program, students in schools that receive a failing grade two out of four years are eligible for vouchers to attend other public or private schools. Relative to other schools, Greene found, schools assigned one "F" have improved at a greater rate, presumably to avoid losing students and funds.

Other studies confirm these results. For example, Harvard University economist Caroline Hoxby found positive impacts from choice programs in Michigan, Arizona, and Milwaukee.

Houston Baptist University researcher Christopher Hammons, who examined the country's two oldest voucher programs, found competition has a positive effect on public schools. Maine and Vermont allow students in school districts without public high schools to attend non-religious private schools through voucher programs called "tuitioning." Hammons found that public high schools in areas with a high concentration of "tuitioning" students experienced higher test scores. High schools not exposed to competition had lower scores.

Although research into the impact of competition on public schools is growing, Greene and Forster say more is needed and should be given high priority.

"Further study of the subject is badly needed," they write, "especially since much less research has been done on this question than on the question of school choice's benefits for students who directly participate in choice programs."

Krista Kafer is senior policy analyst for education at The Heritage Foundation. Her email address is krista.kafer@heritage.org.

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JUST THE FACTS: Educational Effects

Mother's Education Markedly Affects School Readiness

Children's school readiness skills vary markedly by demographics, with mother's education level and family income being the most important factors.

For example, a 1999 study by the National Center for Education Statistics reported that, among pre-kindergarten children of mothers who did not finish high school, only 7 percent could recognize all letters of the alphabet. In sharp contrast, among pre-kindergarten children of mothers with a graduate degree or professional training, 40 percent could recognize all letters of the alphabet.

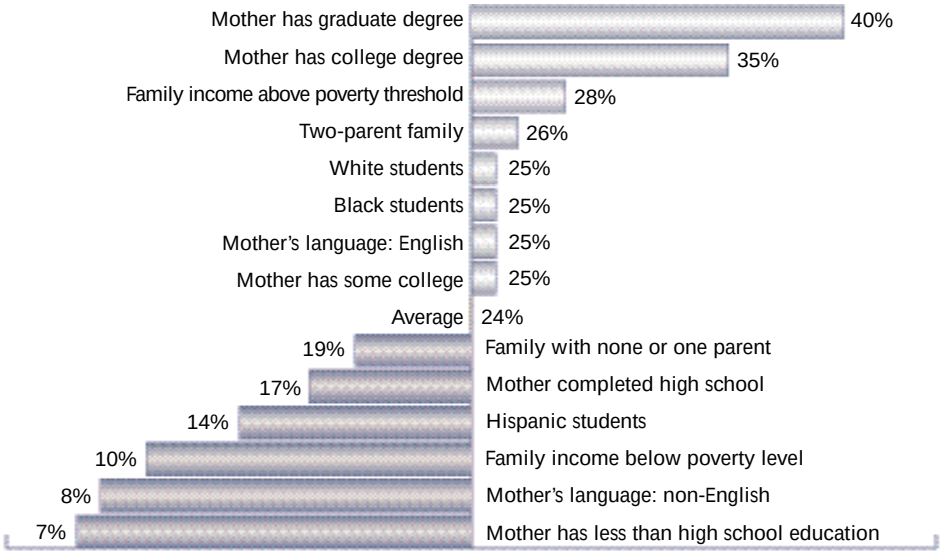
The figure shows how a child's school readiness skills vary with different demographic factors.

For more information…

WWW Data on school readiness skills are from Table 260 of the *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2000*, available from the Census Department at: **www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/statabs/sec04.pdf**.

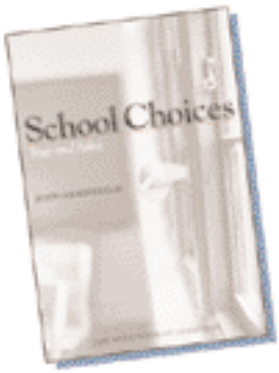
Children's School Readiness Skills

Percent who recognize all letters of the alphabet


Mother has graduate degree 40%
Mother has college degree 35%
Family income above poverty threshold 28%
Two-parent family 26%
White students 25%
Black students 25%
Mother's language: English 25%
Mother has some college 25%
Average 24%
19% Family with none or one parent
17% Mother completed high school
14% Hispanic students
10% Family income below poverty level
8% Mother's language: non-English
7% Mother has less than high school education

Visualize School Choice

Two Essential Books on School Reform



School Choices
True and False

BY JOHN MERRIFIELD
Professor of Economics, University of Texas at San Antonio

The school choice movement has gained momentum in recent years, but today's programs are nothing like the "free market in education" proposed by the early advocates of school choice.

Economist John Merrifield shows that the school choice movement has become mired in false alternatives, and diminished vision. Yet, he argues that school choice must not be allowed to fail like so many other government programs—a freely competitive market for education must remain the ultimate goal. **School Choices: *True and False*** charts a clear course for the achievement of this goal.

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Can Teachers Own Their Own Schools?
New Strategies for Educational Excellence

BY RICHARD K. VEDDER
Professor of Economics, Ohio University

FOREWORD BY CHESTER E. FINN, JR.

This bold study examines the economics, history, and politics of education and shows how public schools could be radically reformed by giving teachers a direct stake in their success. Teacher-owned schools would benefit from competition, market discipline, and would attract the additional funding and expertise needed to revolutionize school systems.

Professor Vedder's plan could end interest group barriers and wasteful bureaucracy and would foster vibrant school communities with increased parental involvement and the necessary innovation and efficiency to produce educational excellence.

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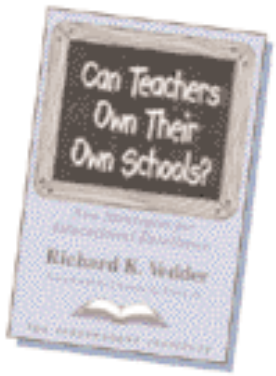

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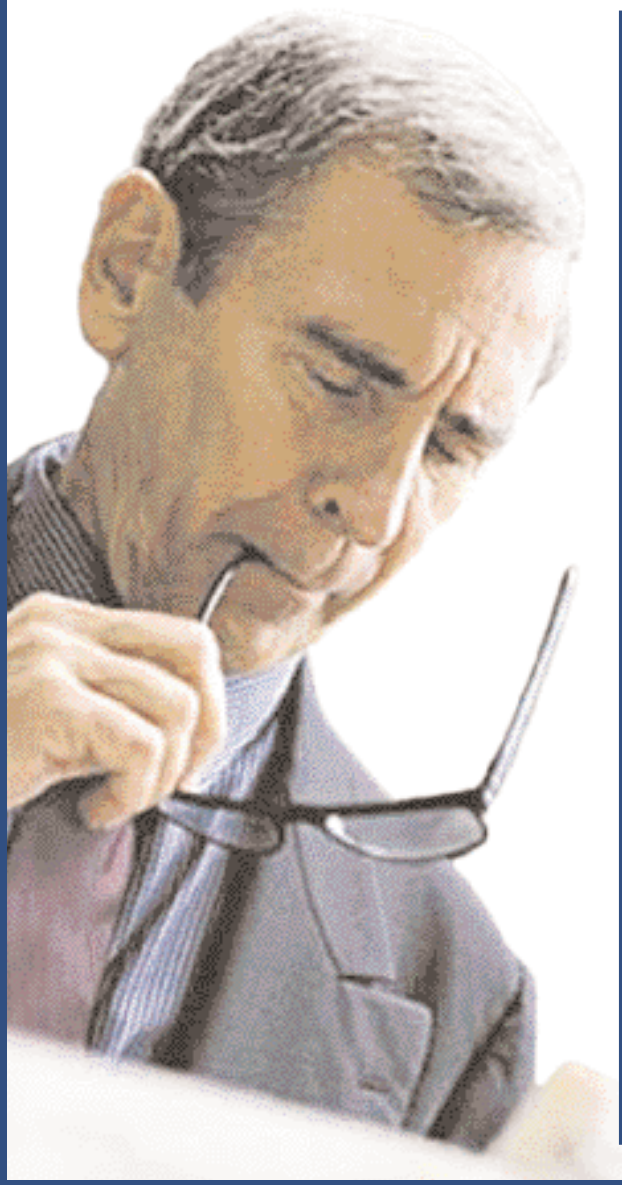

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